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ABSTRACT

Individually Guided Education (IGE) is an educational innovation, developed during the late 1960s and early 1970s, that originated at the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning. It is one of the few innovations that was scheduled for national implementation. The conceptual origins of IGE have their roots in educational psychology with a behavioristic approach to learning. As an alternative approach to schooling, IGE involves differentiated staffing, multiaged grouping of children, and the direct involvement of the principal in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the instructional activities of the school. The seven major components of the program include (1) multiunit school organization, (2) instructional programing for the individual student, (3) evaluation for educational decision making, (4) curriculum materials compatible with instruction and evaluation, (5) home-school-community relations, (6) facilitative environment, and (7) continuing research and development. During the late 1970s a study of the programs found that the three strongest surviving characteristics of the approach were teaming for instruction, shared decision-making, and programing instruction to meet the needs of the individual students. It was determined that the early success of the approach can be attributed to its sound conceptual base, the comprehensiveness and definition of its components, and the fact that it is not an add-on innovation, but an alternative to traditional schooling. (HOD)

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INDIVIDUALLY GUIDED EDUCATION: AN ALTERNATIVE FORM OF SCHOOLING

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Introduction

The period from the middle 1960's to the late 1970's was a period during which educational innovation was much in vogue. Undoubtedly there were any number of factors operating simultaneously generating this climate, not the least of which was the federal and state funding for educational programs. Individually Guided Education (IGE) was one of the educational innovations coming out of that era; an innovation whose development and implementation involved a partnership between schools, state departments of education, universities and agencies such as the research and development center at the University of Wisconsin. Indeed, the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning, under the directorship of Herbert Klausmeier, provided the initial conceptualization of IGE, and the Center served as the major source for support in development and implementation. Although many educational innovations experienced a died-on-the-vine fate, especially after external funding was terminated, IGE has experienced sustained success, to the point of national implementation in thousands of schools and the formulation of its own association, the Association for Individually Guided Education (AIGE).

Conceptual Origins of IGE

IGE may be characterized as a comprehensive model for elementary school instruction designed to accomodate educational reform and innovation. IGE had its beginning in a project called Project MODELS, Maximizing Opportunities for Development and Experimentation in Learning in the Schools, a cooperative project conducted in the middle 1960's between the Wisconsin R & D Center and

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several schools. The multiunit school organization with its research and instruction (R and I) units was implemented in a number of schools, and the multiunit school organization was to become one of the seven components of IGE. Early in 1971 the multiunit organization component was selected by the U. S. Office of Education for nationwide implementation and this initiated the first large-scale implementation effort. Late in 1972, the Sears Roebuck Foundation invited a proposal that led to the funding of the IGE Teacher Education Project at the University of Wisconsin which resulted in a major publication effort of printed and audiovisual instructional materials. These materials were designed for both undergraduate and inservice programs in preparing teachers for IGE schools. In the Summer of 1973, the Association for Individually Guided Education was formed and held its first meeting in November of 1973. With this type of impetus, the number of IGE schools increased rapidly from 50 in 1969-70 to approximately 3,000 in 1974-75.

The conceptual underpinnings of IGE have their roots in educational psychology with a behavioristic approach to learning. Individualized instruction affords the student with the opportunity to learn at his own rate in accordance with his own style of learning. In order to attain this desirable state of affairs, there is an assumption that the school experience can be a rational, efficient and effective response to individual differences. As Kliebard (1979) indicated, this idea has been around for some time in concepts about school organization and curriculum. However, generating such a school experience requires more than a classroom climate; it also requires the necessary support systems to enhance individualized instruction.

Developing the classroom climate that would maximize learning opportunities for students requires a new role for the teacher, one based on differentiated staffing with the opportunity for teachers to capitalize on their individual

talents and interests. This role includes cooperative planning, instruction and evaluation among teachers, and promotes a specialization of tasks. Teachers come in contact with many more students than the traditional 30 or so in the self-contained classroom. Students are multi-age grouped rather than single-age grouped, with 3 to 5 teachers providing the instruction for 90 to 150 students. Thus the role of the teacher is conceptualized as a member of an instructional team with the corresponding planning and instructional management. Successful instructional implementation requires a new role for the principal. Traditionally, the principal has tended to be a building manager. Under IGE the role of the principal was seen as that of instructional leader, one who was directly involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the instructional activities of the school.

One of the weaknesses of education has been that teachers, to a large extent, practice their professions alone. They often work in isolation, pretty much with little direct support from the central office of the school district to say nothing of external agencies such as universities. IGE provided a team teaching context for the teacher, and in addition, required an external support system not only from the district level but from external agencies that could be helpful in improving education through research and reform.

The public school is financially supported by the resources of the community, and the school's singular, major purpose is the education of American youth. Yet, community and parent contact with the schools has often been predominantly negative. If students demonstrate some sort of unacceptable group behavior, the community takes the school to task. Parents are called in if there are academic or discipline problems. Conceptualization of IGE included an active home-school-community relations

program, an on-going program focusing on the improvement of education rather than the solution to isolated problems as they occur on a sporadic basis.

As IGE was conceptualized, it was intended to replace the self-contained, age-graded system of elementary education that has persisted since the middle of the 19th century. IGE was conceptualized as an alternative, not an add-on, educational program. It was designed to be a systems approach to instruction in the elementary school. IGE emphasizes the individual student to maximize learning opportunities, but it also includes the support systems and processes necessary to make such opportunities a reality. In this sense, it is a comprehensive system, which in the final analysis may be greater than the sum of its individual parts since it was designed to impact upon the entire spectrum of elementary education.

The Components of IGE

There are seven major components of IGE and these components in themselves merit considerable description. However, we will simply list them here and make some general comments about their characteristics.[1] The components are:

1) multiunit school organization

2) instructional programming for the individual student

3) evaluation for educational decision making

4) curriculum materials compatible with instruction and evaluation

5) home-school-community relations

6) facilitative environment

7) continuing research and development

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[1]Detailed descriptions of IGE can be found in numerous sources such as H. J. Klausmeier, R. A. Rossmiller and M. Saily (eds). Individually Guided Elementary Education: Concepts and Practices. New York: Academic Press, 1977.

The components do not contribute equally and simultaneously to the composition of IGE, because in any specific implementation of IGE certain components will require more attention than others and emphasis will differ with time. For example, instructional programming and curriculum materials require almost immediate attention while establishing a continuing research and development component may be deferred until other components are operational. Another characteristic of the IGE components is that they are a "mixed bag." Some of them such as instructional programming for the individual student clearly imply process. Others such as compatible curriculum materials imply products. This characteristic is a reflection of the comprehensiveness of IGE since both processes and products are necessary for implementing a program of this sort.

The components of IGE focus on the school, but they are not limited to the school. The multiunit organization, for example, requires a system-wide program committee at the district level. Support systems also come from outside the schools, for example, universities may be involved in the continuing research and development component. The instructional programming model consists of an interrelated sequence of steps which provide the basis for planning and conducting individualized instruction. Overall IGE is a comprehensive system for elementary schooling. The seven components are by no means independent. They are complementary of each other, but they have adequate distinctiveness so they can be identified and operationalized.

The Nature of IGE as Implemented

The seven components of IGE define it quite specifically, but IGE has always been flexible in its implementation. Indeed, in order to have its wide appeal and to remain a system in which school reform can take place, it was necessary for IGE to be compatabile with a variety of characteristics.

IGE has been implemented in small schools and large schools, suburban schools, rural and city schools, in schools whose student populations are located on the entire spectrum of socioeconomic status, and in schools with a variety of physical and financial resources. The ability to accommodate a variety of such technical characteristics is a prerequisite for any kind of comprehensive system. But IGE has demonstrated its capacity to accommodate differences in more subtle characteristics, characteristics such as the underlying concepts of knowledge and the competencies required of students as these vary across schools. As IGE implementation expanded during the 1970's and into the 1980's, there were some profound differences among schools in which implementation took place.

During the late 1970's a rather extensive study of IGE schools was conducted, a good bit of that evaluation consisting of ethnographic research (Romberg, 1985). In-depth research was conducted in a number of IGE schools, research which included extensive visits at the school, supportive data collection and interviews. The results of this study showed interesting similarities and differences among schools as they institutionalized IGE.

Types of School Variations in Professional Ideologies and Related Factors

The varying styles of work and conceptions of knowledge found in the schools revealed three different institutional configurations labeled technical, constructive and illusory. Popkewitz, Tabachnick and Wehlage (1980) descriptively define these configurations as:

> Technical: Children were considered deficient with respect to a predefined body of knowledge and skills. The psychology of learning was behavioristic and knowledge was held to exist outside the minds of individuals. Individualization was a matter of pacing children through specific levels of information and skills.
>
> Constructive: Knowledge was held to be personal to the child and individualization involved the child in a communicative process that would enable him or her to exercise control in interpersonal situations.

> Illusory: Children's backgrounds were seen to be pathological. Individualized instruction was to provide a therapy by which the appropriate social values, dispositions, and behaviors could be sought and acquired, together with those minimal academic skills that students were able to acquire. (p. 368)

The descriptive terms should not be interpreted to imply either "better" or "worse" as to the extent of implementing IGE. Each of the schools had the necessary instructional organization, that is, the multiunit school organization, and factors such as pupil-staff ratios were similar across the schools. Principals consistently demonstrated active and strong leadership in directing the schools' programs. Morale among staff seemed to be high, and the schools were considered to be successful models of elementary education by those outside the schools in leadership roles, for example, the superintendents.

Wherein then, do the three types of schools differ? The school is a social institution and the function of schooling is to provide a structure within which children are educated. The nature of that structure is impacted by perceptions of knowledge, professional ideology and particular social conditions of work. It is in the interweaving of work, knowledge and professional ideologies that the three types of schools differ, and these differences generate varying social patterns by which schooling takes place.

Operational Differences Among Types. Given the types of schools studied were all IGE schools, what operational differences in schooling existed among the three types? The descriptive names give us some clues. In the technical schools the psychology of instruction was basically, "children are deficient and schooling is designed to correct deficiencies." However, this concept is more positively stated using terminology such as, identifying and meeting children's needs or diagnosis and remediation. The locus of deficiency was the individual child, and the teacher's role became one of diagnoser and prescriber. Independent learning was perceived as being as self-instructional as possible.

With this underlying psychology, technologies such as writing behavioral objectives, testing, and grouping (and regrouping) students took on great importance. To some extent, technologies became the ends rather than the means of schooling. These technologies gave definition to the curriculum and classroom activity. The latter tended to involve a high use of routine and standardization of procedures.

The technical schools emphasized concrete learning outcomes, and this emphasis tended not to encourage analytical and critical thought. Content was partitioned into discrete and measurable objectives. The underlying assumption was that learning progresses from the simple to the complex, including an implicit (or in some cases, explicit) hierarchy of skills. A result of this assumption was the content areas less easily behavioralized tended to receive less attention, and in some cases omitted altogether. Correspondingly, reading, mathematics and language arts dominated the curriculum, and aesthetic activities (e.g. music and art) tended to receive little emphasis.

The outwardly, apparent characteristics of the technologies were present. Objectives were often prominently displayed through charts and the like. Record-keeping was highly visible since it was necessary in order for evaluation to maintain its importance in instruction. The instructional improvement committee was viewed by the staff as a management device for the school's program.

Although the concept of technical schooling may have a negative connotation for the reader, technical schools for the most part, had pleasant psychological climates. There was evidence of teachers generating a supportive atmosphere for students through the free use of positive reinforcement. Although the psychology of instruction was one of correcting deficiencies, the prevailing attitude of teachers was that such deficiencies could be corrected.

There was quite an extensive rewards system which was perceived positively by the students.

In contrast to the technical schools, where knowledge and skills were perceived as something to be imparted to the students, the psychological orientation of the constructive schools was that students were capable of building knowledge. There was an emphasis on joining the intellectual and social development of the student. School work was developed around enjoyable activities, and there was no conscious separation between school work and "fun activities."

The curriculum approach in constructive schooling had two somewhat unique characteristics: (1) a problem-solving approach was used for all students, and (2) there was an extensive integration of knowledge and skills across academic disciplines, including aesthetic forms of knowledge. This generated an attitude that academic areas are not the only important content and skills, but that learning has value for its intrinsic pleasure. Instructional activities such as drill were used, but only as they supported the problem solution-integrated knowledge approach to learning.

A wide range of instructional activities were used in the constructive schools. Students had input into determining instructional activities, and they also had some power with respect to evaluation, for example, the evaluation of selected activities from the student perspective. Teachers viewed themselves as being in a decision-making position about curriculum. Such willingness of teachers to assert themselves about curriculum matters can cause tensions in a school system between school staff and central office staff, if school autonomy versus consistency in the district becomes an issue.

The climate for learning in constructive schools was positive. There was emphasis on developing school work as enjoyable activities. Schooling was

an integrated social experience between students and teachers, and to a large extent, their work was inseparable.

The name for the third type of school, illusory, has a general, negative connotation. This name was selected because:

> ...The term illusory emphasizes the false impressions created by everyday patterns of activity (Popkewitz, et al., 1980, p. 276).

There was a lot of talk and symbolism of implementing IGE, but in actuality, instruction was quite rigid and often was sequenced directly as suggested in the curriculum materials with little or no concern for individualization. For example, groups of students tended to remain stable once established, rather than change groups according to student needs. There was a lack of evaluation and little evidence of systematic record keeping, although the instructional programming model was affirmed verbally, and the terminology on the bulletin boards included key words associated with IGE.

Staff members, especially teachers, of illusory schools tended to have pessimistic attitudes about students and the probable effects of schooling. There was an inherent assumption that cultural inadequacy was impossible to overcome, and that normal achievement was possible for only a small portion of the students. Explanations for poor student achievement seldom focused on pedagogical factors, but rather on social and cultural deficiencies.

Illusory schools projected an image of "looking like learning was going on," but in fact, a number of conditions were countering effective learning. The objectives for the schools contained a lot of jargon, but were abstract and did not commit the teachers to anything specific. Instructional objectives would be used if they were available with curriculum materials, but they had little correspondence with school-wide objectives. Subject matter was presented with little concern for its appropriateness for individual students, and there was little follow-through in teaching. Social messages were emphasized rather

than academic content. Probably the consistent perception of IGE among teachers was that of an organizational control over students, especially those that would cause discipline problems under traditional schooling.

All schools have some inconsistency between what they expect or hope to do and what they actually do. However, the nature and the extent of this inconsistency distinguishes illusory schools from technical and constructive schools. The schools discussed were all IGE schools, and from initial appearances they had many of the same characteristics. The staffs of all schools sincerely believed that they had implemented the seven components of IGE, and indeed they had implemented them in one way or another. But the underlying philosophies of the school staffs and the community contexts in which schooling was conducted had profound impact on the actual implementation of IGE.

The Impact and Success of IGE

The research by Popkewitz et al., (1985), revealed the impact of IGE upon schools, but it also showed that IGE is subject to cultural, community and social factors that have impact upon schooling. IGE schools are certainly not homogeneous with respect to the quality of schooling, and that quality is affected by external factors as well as the IGE implementation. IGE has demonstrated its capacity to be implemented in a variety of schools with respect to underlying philosophy, psychology of learning and professional ideologies.

IGE has had a profound effect upon elementary schooling in a number of ways. It has drawn attention to the individual student and the necessity to focus on individual students needs. The Instructional Programming Model, provides the basic structure necessary for individualization. The American public has the belief that the school should serve the individual. This characteristic may counter some of the more recent effects of "back to basics," and "minimum competency testing" movements. Not that these movements advocate

anything against individualization, but in an attempt to meet conditions of these movements, attention will be directed toward groups of students, and schooling will adjust accordingly. For example, as minimum competency testing programs are implemented, there will be direct concern with the percentages of students that attain minimum competency at designated points. Attention will focus on group rather than individual performance.

In schools in which it has been implemented, IGE has had an impact upon the professional staff. Surveys have indicated that one of the things teachers like best about their jobs is their relationship with other teachers. IGE provides the organizational structure for teachers to work together in a team-teaching arrangement. Teaming is a characteristic of IGE that has survived, including differentiated staffing which enables the I and R unit to capitalize on teacher strengths. There is also a position within the team for the master teacher, so to speak, the unit leader. IGE gives the mantle of instructional leader within the school to the principal, a role often advocated but not operationalized under traditional schooling. Both the teacher and the principal can maximize their roles as professionals in IGE schools.

Closely related to the team-teaching characteristic of IGE is the shared decision-making among the professional staff. At the school level shared decision-making is implemented through a committee chaired by the principal. This committee goes by names such as the instructional improvement committee, the school improvement committee or the school-level committee. The shared decision-making at the unit level in the instructional team and that at the building level have much appeal to educators.

As we review the development of IGE over almost two decades we can see that the three, strongest surviving characteristics are teaming for instruction,

shared decision-making, and programming instruction to meet the needs of the individual students. Undoubtedly there is a professional receptivity for these characteristics. But the success of IGE is due to more than receptivity. Schooling is a complex, social phenomenon and success of any educational innovation of the magnitude of IGE, undoubtedly involves a combination of factors, some most likely unknown. From an operational standpoint, at least the early success of IGE can be attributed to:

1. the sound conceptual base, both psychological and pedagogical,
2. the comprehensiveness and definition of IGE components, and
3. the fact that IGE is not an add-on innovation, but an alternative to traditional schooling.

Sound conceptualization and definition of an educational innovation do not insure success; there must also be a receptivity for it. Initially, the education profession must be receptive to the innovation, and secondly the public (especially parents of school-age children) for sustained success. Over the past two decades of American education, there has been the belief that individualism is important. The apparent intensity of this belief has varied, but nonetheless it is present. IGE is attractive to educational professionals because it combines individualism with he concept of scientific management, as exemplified in the systems approach to instruction. Popkewitz, et al., (1980) in their comprehensive study of IGE schools, concluded that the most important factor in the success of IGE was stressing both individualism and a scientific attack on the problems of schooling (p. 88).

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